



YOUR NEW SUPER SKILL

HARNESS THE POWER OF PUBLIC SPEAKING TO GET AHEAD

DON'T PANIC: Inking Women's Gemma Munro. Picture: MATT TURNER

BOYS-club culture, pay gaps and subconscious discrimination are being addressed by progressive companies but there is still much women can do themselves to help boost their careers.

The struggle of women to reach the same career heights as their male counterparts has been well documented.

However, experts agree more women need to learn to use the powerful tool of speaking up.

Dr Gemma Munro, chief executive of training and development organisation Inking Women, says women tend to shy away from public speaking roles more than men.

"If you don't speak up in the workplace, you don't show your full potential at work," she says. "Any

time you are offered a chance to speak in front of a group - even if you want to go and hide under a doona - you have to say 'yes'.

"(Women tend to) handball speaking opportunities off to others and don't get the practice and sooner rather than later they have to speak in front of a group and because they haven't had that practice they don't show their full potential."

Munro says women can boost their confidence before speaking with a power pose.

"A lot of women sit there and make their body small because that's what they have been taught to do," she says. "They should sit with their hands on their hips."

Another way to get in the zone before speaking is to listen to music or play it in their head.

Munro recommends choosing a song that makes them feel excited or confident or reminds them of a happy time.

"I speak a lot and will still go into a toilet cubical and play a song on my headphones and do some power poses," she says.

Psychologist and owner of Fearless Speaking Justine Armstrong says the fear of public speaking is rampant in the workforce and damages careers.

"I know of women who haven't gone for promotions because it means they will need to do some public speaking in their work life," she says. "Many women put their career development on hold because they can't face their fear."

Armstrong says speaking is becoming a very necessary skill.

"Women seem to suffer more

than men, because as a whole, women are more likely to lack self-confidence in the workplace," she says.

"We know male employees are more likely to ask for pay rises, take new ideas to the boss and be open to doing presentations at a board level. Meanwhile women are pun-king about it in the bathroom."

"IT professionals, accountants and those in the financial services sector are among those no longer hiding behind their computer screens, instead opting to embrace the spotlight and improve their personal development."

"Those who know how to use public speaking positively are more likely to present better in an interview situation and their prospects of promotion increase dramatically."

RISK & REWARD CHASE A DREAM THAT LIGHTS YOU UP

THINKING big is the first step to success but women tend to avoid this as they fear what others will think, Inking Women chief executive Dr Gemma Munro says.

"Because of that, there tends to be less of a willingness to take those risks," she says. "Go for giant, outrageous, liberating dreams instead of piddly inoffensive goals. I see a lot of women who get to the end of the day and tick off all the things on their to-do list but they are chasing other people's dreams and goals."

"When you are chasing a dream that lights you up, it pulls you out of bed and increases your confidence and resilience so you master obstacles with far more energy and this makes one of the biggest differences in terms of creating a career you love and are proud of."

4 TIPS TO COMBAT FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

1 IT'S OK TO BE NERVOUS

Often people give themselves a hard time for being nervous. This self-talk will be extremely critical, which becomes self-fulfilling. Tell yourself you have every right to be nervous, then use that adrenalin to your advantage.

2 DON'T BE FAKE & INSPIRE

Authenticity is key. People can spot a fake a mile off so be yourself. Let the audience know you're not perfect - that will help them warm to you. Offer words of inspiration as people remember how you make them feel.

3 KEEP IT SIMPLE

The biggest trap people fall into is trying to deliver too much information during their talk, which can bore the audience. Instead, opt for an entertaining story that highlights your point you are trying to make.

4 DEATH BY POWERPOINT

There's nothing worse than listening to data read from a PowerPoint screen. Speak from the heart. Once you're thinking about the content, the spotlight moves away from your nerves.

JUSTINE ARMSTRONG, FEARLESS SPEAKING